

# THE SACRED MONTH OF MUHARRAM

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The literal meaning of Muḥarram is “forbidden, sacred and worthy of reverence.” It is one of the four months about which Allāh ﷻ states:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ

وَالْأَرْضِ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ

“Indeed, the number of months with Allāh is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allāh [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred months.”

[Al-Tawbah:36]

These four sacred months are: Dhul Qa’dah, Dhul Hijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab. Prior to the advent of Islām, these months were considered sacred even by the Pagans of Arabia. It was forbidden to wage war and fight during these sacred months, which resulted in complete peace. Consequently, they performed Ḥajj during the first three months and ‘Umrah in the fourth.

Muḥarram is the first month of the Islāmic Hijri calendar. The Hijri calendar is based on the Hijrah (migration) of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, its actual application began in 17 A.H. during the caliphate of ‘Umar Farūq رضي الله عنه. He dispatched letters to his governors which did not bear any date. The governor of Yemen, Abū Mūsa Ash‘ari رضي الله عنه brought this concern before ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He set up a small committee to resolve this issue wherein it was decided that the Hijri calendar will begin from the Hijrah of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah.

Therefore 622 A.D. became 1 A.H. and since the decision to migrate was made at the end of the month of Dhul Hijjah, and the first moon to rise after this was that of Muḥarram, it became the first month of the Hijri calendar. [Fath al Barī]

The origin of the Hijri calendar serves as a great reminder of the sacrifices, devotion and love of those who migrated for Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ.

## The Beginning of a New Year

Time is indeed a great blessing from Allāh ﷻ, rolling diligently along its own set pattern and speed. It waits for no one and it passes us quickly. Time will come and go, as Allāh ﷻ has decreed, but what remains written in “Time” is how each person utilized that time. The beginning of each New Year makes the one gone by the past. At the same time the coming New Year brings with it new opportunities and the motivation to start afresh.

This upcoming Muḥarram is a great blessing, it is a chance to reflect upon our blessing, it is a chance to reflect upon our former years and to plan on how to lead better and more purposeful lives for the future. Let us make the most of this great blessing and enhance our lives by engaging in beneficial activities and righteous deeds. We can now hope to turn transient seconds into definite opportunities for securing reward in our favour, striving to make eternal success our destiny and saving ourselves from eternal ruin.

Junaid Bāghdādi said: “Assess each moment of life by evaluating how close you have come to Allāh ﷻ, how far you have distanced yourself from Shaitān, how close you have come to Jannah and how far you have moved away from Jahannam.”

Begin the New Year with a fresh resolution and a pristine motivation. Gear up for it physically and mentally, making a resolve to:

- Strengthen your relationship with Allāh ﷻ.
- Return to your worships with renewed enthusiasm and diligence.
- Improve upon serving your parents well and giving relatives their rights.
- Refocus on the moral upbringing of your family and children.
- Plan further learning and self-development.
- Seek to participate in social works for the benefit of those less fortunate than yourselves in the society.

## Historical Events

- It is the month in which Allāh ﷻ granted victory to Prophet Mūsa عليه السلام and his nation, Banī Isrāīl over Pharaoh. [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2658]
- The famous episode of the “Year of the Elephants” took place in this month in which Abraha, together with his army of elephants, attempted to destroy the Holy Ka’bah. [Encyclopedia of Islam]
- ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was unable to survive his wounds from his assassination attempt & attained martyrdom on

1<sup>st</sup> Muḥarram, 23 A.H.

- The Prophet ﷺ's grandson, Hussain عليه السلام, along with his family members were martyred on 10<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram, 61 A.H. in the plain of Karbala.

### Muḥarram and Fasting

The significance of fasting in Muḥarram can be best understood by the Ḥadith of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

أَفْضَلُ الصِّيَامِ بَعْدَ رَمَضَانَ شَهْرُ اللَّهِ الْمُحَرَّمِ

“The most excellent fast after Ramaḍān is in Allāh's month, Muḥarram.”

[Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2755]

### Fasting on 10<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram

Fasting on any day of Muḥarram holds reward with Allāh ﷻ, but 10<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram, known as ‘Ashūrā’ has more significance as compared to other days.

‘Ā’ishah عليها السلام narrates: “The people of Makkah used to fast on ‘Ashūrā’ in the days of ignorance and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also kept this fast. He continued to keep this fast even after migration to Madinah and commanded (the Companions) to keep this fast. When fasts of the month of Ramaḍān were made compulsory, Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said: “Whoever wishes to fast (on the day of ‘Ashūrā’) may do so; and whoever wishes to leave it can do so.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2637]

Regarding the fast of the Day of Ashūrā’, Abū Qatadah رضي الله عنه narrates that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ also said:

صِيَامُ يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءَ أَحْتَسِبُ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ السَّنَةَ الَّتِي قَبْلَهُ

“I believe that Allāh will forgive the sins of the past year in return of the fast of

‘Ashūrā’.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2746]

Abū Qatāda رضي الله عنه also narrates:

سُئِلَ عَنْ صَوْمِ يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءَ فَقَالَ يَكْفِرُ السَّنَةَ الْمَاضِيَةَ

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was asked about the fast of ‘Ashūrā’ and he said, “It is an expiation for the sins of the past one year.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2747]

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:

“When Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ came to Madinah, he observed the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Ashūrā’, so he asked them about it. They said, “It is a day of great importance. This day Prophet Mūsa عليه السلام and his nation were freed, Pharaoh and his nation were drowned and hence Prophet Mūsa عليه السلام fasted as a token of thanksgiving. Thereby, we follow him by keeping this fast.” To this the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, “We are closer to Prophet Mūsa عليه السلام in association than you.” Hence, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself fasted on this day and asked his companions to do the same. [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2658]

### Resembling Acts of Non-Muslims

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ expressed his desire to fast on 9<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram along with the 10<sup>th</sup> in order to avoid resemblance with the Jews.

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ fasted on the day of ‘Ashūrā’ and recommended his Companions to do the same. To this the community replied, O Messenger of Allāh ﷻ, this is a day revered by the Jews and Christians. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, “Next year, InshāAllāh, we will join it with the fast of the 9<sup>th</sup>.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2666]

However, Prophet ﷺ passed away before the next ‘Ashūrā’. Thus, it is

recommended to observe fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> along with the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muḥarram. In case the fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> is missed, it can be made up by keeping a fast on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Muḥarram instead.

Hence, we learn that it is important that Muslims consciously strive to avoid resemblance with non-Muslims, whether it is in worship, beliefs, habits, lifestyle or traditions of any kind. ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ

“Whoever imitates a nation is considered one of them.” [Sunan Abū Dawūd: 4031]

### Observing the Sanctity of Muḥarram

Regarding this sacred month Allah ﷻ has also said:

فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ

“Do not wrong yourselves in these months.” [al-Tawbah:36]

This means that in this month we should make a conscious effort to avoid displeasing and disobeying Allah ﷻ, we must be more careful to not indulge in any acts which are considered a sin or an innovation or discouraged in the Din. There are many opportunities to attain great reward during this month and we should strive our utmost to avail each of them.

- During the sacred months, fighting is prohibited and peace is guaranteed.
- When observing the sanctity and reverence of this month it is incumbent on us that we also, Avoid all types of quarrels,

arguments and disputes.

- Respect the life, wealth and honour of our fellow beings.

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in his sermon of Farewell Pilgrimage: “Your blood, wealth and honour are as sacred upon each other as the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this city of yours.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 1739]

Is this message of our beloved Messenger ﷺ not enough for us?

- Avoid hurting others by the tongue or by hand.
- Do not disrespect or revile any of the blessed companions of Prophet ﷺ.
- Let go of all grudges and spread the message of peace and friendship by your words and actions.

May Allah ﷻ grant us the ability to walk on the Right Path. Āmīn.



To find out more about Muḥarram, listen to the audio lecture:

“Muḥarram al-Ḥarām, Sal e Nou ka Paigham”

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